

# Pilgrims struggle for parking as Kavlem tourism complex turns into dumping ground

Team Herald

**PONDA:** Pilgrims and tourists visiting the renowned Shantadurga Temple in Kavlem are facing severe hardships due to the lack of parking facilities. The only available open space, located in front of an old, dilapidated tourist hotel, has been converted into a dumping site, with heaps of construction debris and mud accumulating in the area.

The bypass road at Kavlem, which directly connects Dhavalim to the Farmagudi Highway, has also turned into a dumping ground. Due to its isolated location, unknown individuals have been discarding waste and mud at the site, further worsening the situation near the abandoned tourism complex.

Despite being one of India's most prominent pilgrimage destinations, the Shantadurga Temple and its



Bypass road at Kavlem has also turned into a dumping ground for discarded waste and rubble

surrounding infrastructure have been neglected by the Tourism Department for over two decades.

The 4,000-square-metre tourism complex, built in 1996, was originally intended to provide accommodation and amenities for visitors, including a hotel, dormitories, and toilet blocks. However, it has been

lying abandoned for years. The restaurant within the complex has been shut for the past decade, while the dormitories were operational for only three years before being left in disrepair. Over time, the area has been overtaken by overgrown trees and bushes, making it difficult to even spot the structure.

With thousands of tourists and pilgrims visiting Kavlem annually, locals have long demanded that the site be converted into a parking facility. The Kavlem Panchayat has repeatedly urged the Tourism Department to either handover the abandoned project for local development or repurpose it into

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a parking lot, but no response has been received.

Residents argue that demolishing the deteriorating complex and developing a parking space would greatly ease congestion and improve visitor convenience. However, no concrete steps have been taken by the authorities so far.

# 6 years on, Collem Health Centre still incomplete

## Villagers lash out at authorities for being insensitive to patients; say forced to travel for 30 kms to seek treatment

Team Herald

**PONDA:** Collem locals have urged the government to complete the long-delayed upgradation of the rural health centre, which has been under construction for the past six years.

Residents blasted the authorities for the indifferent attitude towards ailing patients and senior citizens who they said had to travel to distant places to seek treatment.

Vasudev Ganjekar, a local resident recalled that Chief Minister Pramod Sawant had promised last year that the project would be completed within three months. However, one year has passed, and there has been no significant progress. "Even for minor health issues, we are forced to travel 30 km to Pilem, Tisk-Usgao Hospital," he said.

According to the residents, the rural medical centre was initially established in Collem in 1984. Recognising the growing healthcare needs of the local population, the government laid the foundation stone for the hospital's upgradation in 2018. The event was attended by the late former Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar, along with Health Minister Vishwajit Rane, the then MLA and GSIDC chairman Deepak Prabhu Pauskar, and GSIDC chairman



**"If necessary, I am prepared to take to the streets along with the people to demand the hospital's completion. Even the poorest residents should have access to medical facilities in times of need"**

– Govind Shigaonkar, Sarpanch, Collem-Shigao

"The completion of this hospital would benefit residents from the four panchayats in Dharbandora taluka: Sarcorda, Collem, Mollem, and Kallam. This facility is especially crucial for accident victims. If an accident occurs on the Mollem-Anmod route, patients must currently be transported for 30 kms to Pilem Usgao, which can be life-threatening," he explained.

Expressing his frustration, Shigaonkar warned that if the work is not completed soon, he is willing to organise a public demonstration. "If necessary, I am prepared to take to the streets along with the people to demand the hospital's completion. Even the poorest residents should have access to medical facilities in times of need," he stated.

Sidharth Kuncolienkar.

Despite the foundation stone being laid six years ago, the work remains incomplete. Govind Shigaonkar, Sarpanch of Collem-Shigao, expressed his concern over the delay, stating, "It has been six years, and the 10-bed hospital is still unfinished. The contractor is not responding to the panchayat, despite repeated demands from villagers in every gram sabha meeting for the hospital to be completed as soon as possible."

He stressed the importance of the hospital for the surrounding remote villages.

## CLOCK'S TICKING



With just a week to go before the High Court deadline, Panjim's MG Road is marred by a massive crater as labourers toil late into the night to complete this critical stretch of the Smart City infrastructure project. Citizens who work here hope that the contractor will meet the deadline and not abandon the site, leaving behind a trail of mud, rubble, and discarded pipes for them to navigate

# Two arrested for Calangute murder

Team Herald

**CALANGUTE:** The police arrested two persons from Delhi and Indore in connection with a murder at a hotel in Calangute.

The Calangute Police said they received a complaint on March 17 from one Abdul Jahir Sarkar that some unknown persons committed murder of 39-year-old Bhavna Tomar by entering her room at a hotel in Khorawaddo, Calangute on March 15 between 5.07 am and 10.47 pm.

During investigations, police found that a man and a woman had entered the room and had murdered the deceased and stole her

bag and mobile phone.

The accused have been identified as Rahul Maheshwari, 40, a native of Delhi and Rashmi Solanki, 43, a native of Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

Police said that both the accused were absconding and were traced through electronic surveillance in Delhi and Indore. Two Calangute police teams were sent to arrest them. They were brought to Goa on Saturday evening and have been remanded in police custody. The Calangute Police have registered an offence under Sections 329 (3), 303 (2), 103 r/w 3 (5) of BNS 2023. Further investigations are on.

# Recovery of house tax arrears dominates Benaullim gram sabha

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The Benaullim gram sabha, held on Sunday, approved its annual budget for the forthcoming financial year.

However, the budget matter also saw a discussion over the pending house tax collection. While the estimated collection stood at Rs 91 lakh, the actual collection so far has been around Rs 45-47 lakh, leaving a significant gap.

During the discussion on this topic, concerns were raised about the addressing the pending shortfall. The sarpanch assured the gram sabha that demand notices had already been issued to defaulters and that efforts were being made to recover the pending dues. He added that they are actively working to complete the recovery process and ensure the estimated target is met.

On another topic, it may be recalled that the gram sabha in during its meeting on November 24, 2024 had taken a resolution urging the panchayat to take up carrying capacity of the village before it could think of issuing construction licences for multi-housing projects. It was also resolved that the Panchayat should also write to the Government that no technical clearances should be issued for housing projects of more than four units before the

Carrying Capacity study is completed.

However yesterday, during reading out the action taken report, the villagers were shocked to find that

## VILLAGE VOICES

the panchayat had neither undertaken the study nor wrote to the government about the resolution. Gram sabha member, Rudolf

**The sarpanch assured the gram sabha that demand notices had already been issued to defaulters and that efforts were being made to recover the pending dues. He added that they are actively working to complete the recovery process and ensure the estimated target is met.**

Barretto who had moved the resolution in November last castigated the chair for non-compliance. He further sought to know as to when the resolutions were taken up before the panchayat body meeting, they were shocked to know that the issues were taken up for discussion only in February. When probed further if the particular resolution was accepted or rejected by the Panchayat, Sarpanch Xavier Pereira had no answer.

# Coldem-Navelim residents demand speed breakers, threaten road blockade

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** Residents of Coldem-Navelim, located just metres away from the Belem traffic junction, staged a protest near a road underpass, demanding the immediate installation of speed breakers on the service road. The protesters issued a seven-day ultimatum to authorities, warning of a road blockade if their demand is not met.

The residents highlighted that the Coldem road has become increasingly accident-prone, with several accidents reported over the past two months. "We have witnessed multiple accidents on this road recently. Despite our repeated pleas, the authorities have failed to install speed breakers or even signboards to alert motorists

to halt before taking turns. Are they waiting for a fatal accident to happen before taking action?" questioned the agitated residents.

Frustrated by the lack of response, the community has threatened to block the road if speed breakers are not installed within the next week.

While locals tried calling the local MLA and the PWD engineer in vain during the protest, they also lamented that despite having sent letters to the Navelim and Telaulim panchayat, no action had been taken.

They gave examples of accidents that have injured local residents and added that when they asked the authorities to put speed breakers, they were told that they did not obtain permission from the RTO and other departments.

Besides the demand for speed breakers on four sides after removing the rumblers, they have also asked for huge 'Compulsory Stop' signs at the junctions, to make traffic halt at the crossing, as well as convex mirrors to improve visibility at blind turns.

Meanwhile, after a wait of nearly three months, the Belem traffic junction in Navelim has finally received much-needed traffic signage. The PWD and National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) installed the signboards, marking the Margao Western bypass as open for traffic heading to North Goa. The bypass was inaugurated on December 23, 2024, but the absence of proper signage had led to confusion and traffic mismanagement.

# Davorlim-Dicarpale gram sabha passes budget

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The Davorlim-Dicarpale gram sabha on Sunday passed their annual budget for the forthcoming financial year.

There was also a demand from the ST farmers that a provision be kept to help them with their agriculture related activities, which the panchayat body agreed to add. Ongoing road digging work was also raised with questions raised about when the said works would be completed. This included the laying of the underground gas pipeline. Locals also wanted sewerage works to be completed at the earliest.

The panchayat informed the gram sabha members that they had already spoken to the Navelim MLA Ulhas Tuenkar about these issues so that the work could be expedited. Emphasis on keeping the village clean and green was also laid on during the meeting. There was also the issue of the panchayat delay in forming the village-level committees as is required under the Panchayati Raj Act.

# Margao police raid illegal scrapyard near indoor stadium

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The Margao Town Police have taken action against an illegal scrapyard operating near the Manohar Parrikar Indoor Stadium in Khareband, Margao. According to a police press release, a complaint on behalf of the state was filed by Police Sub-Inspector (PSI) Nilesh Shirvoikar against Devappa Lamani, a resident of Shantinagar, Margao, for the unauthorised collection and storage of scrap materials.

The scrapyard, located just meters away from the stadium and adjacent to its retaining wall, has reportedly been burning scrap materials during dusk hours. This practice poses significant environmental and health risks due to

the toxic fumes released, endangering nearby residents and athletes using the stadium.

Police have urged citizens to report any similar illegal scrapyard activities and have reminded scrap dealers and business operators to adhere to environmental regulations and legal waste disposal protocols.

Authorities have assured that municipal officials and law enforcement agencies will continue monitoring and taking strict action against violators. The police have also emphasized the need for public cooperation to maintain a safe and healthy environment. Further investigations are ongoing, and necessary legal action will be taken against those involved.

**KEY CONCERNS HIGHLIGHTED BY POLICE**

- Environmental pollution:** Burning scrap releases harmful toxins into the air, severely affecting air quality.
- Health hazards:** Inhalation of toxic fumes can cause respiratory issues and other serious health conditions, especially for athletes and residents in the vicinity.
- Public safety risks:** The scrapyard's close proximity to residential areas and the stadium increases the risk of fire hazards and potential outbreaks of vector-borne diseases.

# Tributes paid to Dr Lohia

Team Herald

**MARGAO:** The Congress Party's Margao block marked the 115th birth anniversary of Dr Ram Manohar Lohia on Sunday by offering floral tributes at his statue at Lohia Maidan Margao.

AICC Secretary Dr Anjali Nimbalkar highlighted their efforts, emphasizing how their actions laid the foundation for Goa's struggle for liberation. South Goa MP Captain Viriato Fernandes, who was also present, praised both Dr Lohia and Dr Menezes for their contributions to the historic events of June 18, 1946, known as Kranti Din.

# Colvale cops crackdown on illegal tenants, scrapyard violations

Team Herald

**COLVALE:** A security and compliance drive carried out by the Colvale Police has revealed multiple legal violations, with illegal tenants and scrapyard irregularities coming to light in areas spanning from Camurlim to Colvale.

Led by Police Inspector Vijay Rane, the operation focused on ensuring that tenants had valid documentation and that scrapyards were adhering to legal regulations. The initiative was undertaken as part of a broader effort to maintain law and order and prevent

illegal activities in the region.

During the verification process in Camurlim, officers discovered that while 14 individuals had valid documents, 12 tenants were residing without proper paperwork.

Authorities have reiterated the importance of tenant verification, urging landlords to maintain accurate records and comply with legal residency requirements. Officials warn that failure to follow proper documentation processes could lead to legal consequences for both landlords and tenants.

Alongside tenant verification, police also conducted scrapyard inspections in the area. The results were concerning, with 38 scrapyard owners found to be in violation of Section 152 BNSS. These cases have been escalated to the Deputy Collector for further action.

The police have assured that such operations will continue, as part of a sustained strategy to enforce regulations and enhance public safety. Authorities are urging both residents and business owners to ensure compliance with legal requirements to avoid penalties and further scrutiny.

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